

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of the claims:

Claims 12-24 (cancelled)

Claim 25 (new): Method of dewatering sludge, comprising

addition of a basic agent to sludge having a pH equal to or less than 8,

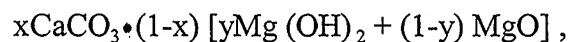
addition to the sludge of at least one flocculating organic component,

by the addition of the above mentioned basic agent, an increase in pH of the sludge to a value less than a pH as from which degradation of the said at least one organic component takes place,

flocculation of the sludge, and

separation of the flocculated sludge between dewatered sludge and a liquid phase,

characterized in that the above mentioned basic agent is a calcareo-magnesian compound complying with the formula



in which

x and y are molar fractions

$0.45 \leq x \leq 0.75$, and

$0 \leq y \leq 1$,

and in that the treated sludge has, until after the said separation, the said value lower than a pH as from which degradation of the said at least one organic component takes place.

Claim 26 (new): Method according to claim 25 characterized in that the calcaro-magnesian compound is a half-burnt dolomite, comprising an MgO component, possibly partially or totally in the form of $\text{Mg}(\text{OH})_2$.

Claim 27 (new): Method according to claim 25, characterized in that it comprises the said increase in pH to a value of no more than 10.

Claim 28 (new): Method according to claim 25, characterized in that the addition of the calcaro-magnesian compound takes place prior to, simultaneously with and/or after the addition of the said at least one flocculating organic compound.

Claim 29 (new): Method according to claim 28, characterized in that the addition of the calcaro-magnesian compound takes place before the above mentioned separation step.

Claim 30 (new): Method according to claim 25, characterized in that it comprises, after the said separation, an incineration of the dewatered sludge.

Claim 31 (new): Method according to claim 25, characterized in that, in the case of acid sludge, it also comprises a prior neutralization of this acid sludge so that it has a pH of at least 6.

Claim 32 (new): Method according to claim 26, characterized in that it the half-burnt dolomite issues from a burning of double calcium and magnesium carbonate under conditions such that it has a CaO content of less than 5% by weight and an MgCO_3 content of less than 10% by weight.

Claim 33 (new): Use of a calcaro-magnesian compound complying with the formula $x\text{CaCO}_3 \cdot (1-x)$ $[\text{yMg}(\text{OH})_2 + (1-y)\text{MgO}]$, in which x and y are molar fractions, $0.45 \leq x \leq 0.75$, and $0 \leq y \leq 1$, for the treatment and dewatering of sludge having a pH equal to or less than 8.